

SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 8 JUNE 2011**DRAFT LEICESTERSHIRE RURAL FRAMEWORK, 2011-14****REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE****Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of this report is to consult the Scrutiny Commission on the draft Leicestershire Rural Framework, 2011-14, developed by the Leicestershire Rural Partnership (LRP)

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Medium Term Delivery Plan identifies how the County Council will work to support rural communities. This includes better co-ordinated and integrated service planning, improvements to Leicestershire's rural economy and access to services, development of village parish council websites, good quality public and community transport provision, affordable rural housing, reduced rural isolation, and support to develop community-led planning,
3. The LRP, supported by the County Council, co-ordinates the activities of a number of agencies delivering services in rural Leicestershire. This co-ordination takes place within the strategic framework provided by the Leicestershire Rural Strategy, 2007-14, jointly prepared by the members of the LRP and formally approved by the County Council.
4. The LRP has a formal membership of 22 organisations. Established in 1993 the LRP works to co-ordinate, influence, advise and deliver for, and on behalf of, rural Leicestershire. The LRP is chaired by the County Council's Cabinet Lead for Rural Affairs – Mrs Lesley Pendleton CC. The County Council hosts the LRP and provides significant resources, including a budget, to help deliver rural priorities.

Background

5. The third Leicestershire Rural Strategy, 2007-14 was launched at the LRP's bi-annual conference in 2007 to help ensure delivery of the 2026 Vision for rural Leicestershire. It has supported a number of funding bids, including the securing of £1.8m to deliver the INSPIRE Leicestershire and Vibrant Villages grant programmes, informed consultation responses and helped the LRP influence other organisations in their support of rural Leicestershire.

6. The scheduled refresh of the Strategy was initiated in autumn 2010 to ensure it was still fit for purpose. The draft document reflects new priorities, including the Big Society, and changes to governance structures, including new public health commitments, Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership, Leicestershire Together commissioning hub structure, and contents of the County Council's Medium Term Delivery Plan. To reflect the significant number of changes it has been renamed as Leicestershire Rural Framework, 2011-14.
7. The public consultation on the draft Leicestershire Rural Framework, 2011-14 will run from the 18 April 2011 until the 30 June 2011.

Leicestershire Rural Framework, 2011-14

8. The Framework includes a draft revised 20-year Vision for rural Leicestershire. This is outlined below.

In 2026 rural Leicestershire will be made up of thriving, and safe communities, which have access to good employment opportunities, affordable housing and essential local services.

Rural Leicestershire will be recognised locally, nationally and internationally for its:

- *Active communities with residents who influence local decisions and support the delivery of local services*
 - *Joined up planning systems to support housing, services and employment*
 - *Centre of excellence for Food and Drink*
 - *A destination for family days out and holidays*
 - *High quality equestrian services and facilities*
 - *Open and maintained countryside including the National Forest and Charnwood Forest*
 - *Excellent opportunities for vocational training in rural skills*
 - *Well connected and innovative farming community*
 - *High performing SMEs in rural areas*
 - *Contribution to developing and using resource efficiency programmes*
9. The Framework includes 15 specific priority outcomes arranged by the following theme chapters. These cover strong, safe and inclusive communities, thriving economy, high quality and accessible services, and the countryside and the environment.
 10. The consultation seeks views from consultees on what the LRP's priority outcomes should be. This will help prioritise the allocation of resources.
 11. More information about the consultation can be found on the LRP's website at www.oakleaves.org.uk/framework.

Consultations

12. A 9-week public consultation on the draft Leicestershire Rural Framework, 2011-14 was launched on 18 April 2011 – ending 30 June 2011.
13. The consultation has been promoted direct to county councillors and district councils and through the Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils, Leicestershire Villages website, Community Forums, and Rural Community Council (Leicestershire and Rutland). Consultees will be reminded of the consultation and encouraged to respond during early June.

Resources Implications

14. A review of the Community Planning Branch within Chief Executive's will reduce the staffing levels in support of the LRP from October 2011. This issue is being addressed within the refresh. Greater emphasis will be placed on influencing partners and commissioning specific activity to ensure delivery of the priority outcomes contained within the Leicestershire Rural Framework.

Timetable for Decisions

15. The final Leicestershire Rural Framework, reflecting comments made during the consultation, including Scrutiny Commission, will be presented to Cabinet on 26 July and County Council on 28 September 2011.

Conclusion

16. The Commission is asked to comment on the draft Leicestershire Rural Framework, 2011-14 as attached at Appendix A.

Background Papers

Review of the Leicestershire Rural Strategy, 2007-14. Report of the Chief Executive to Scrutiny Commission. 25 April 2007.

Circulation Under Sensitive Issues Procedures

None.

Officer to Contact

Matthew Kempson
Rural Partnership's Manager
Tel: 0116 305 6179; Email matthew.kempson@leics.gov.uk

List of Appendices

Draft Leicestershire Rural Framework, 2011-14

Relevant Impact Assessments:

Equal Opportunities Implications

The Leicestershire Rural Strategy, 2007-14 is subject to an EIA to ensure the equality and diversity issues are taken into account. The EIA will be refreshed to reflect the revised priority outcomes.

Crime and Disorder Implications

Leicestershire Constabulary is a member of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership. The Constabulary work with the LRP to help ensure safer communities in rural areas. This includes, for example, helping to tackle business crime (e.g. on-farm) and encourage Neighbourhood Watch schemes.

Environmental Impact

The LRP membership includes representation from the Environment Hub (formerly ENABLE) established within the proposed new SCS governance arrangements.

Partnership Working and Associated Issues

Delivery of the Leicestershire Rural Framework is co-ordinated by the Leicestershire Rural Partnership working with a range of private, public and voluntary organisations. The LRP will work with Leicestershire Together and the emerging Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership to deliver rural priorities.

Risk Assessment

Successful delivery of the Framework will rely on strong partnership working. A peer assessment of the LRP governance arrangements has been initiated. This will help ensure that the LRP is fit for purpose and that the partnership is best able to influence, commission and monitor delivery.